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ABSTRACT

Data on practicing school psychologists (N=211) were derived from a modified version of the National School Psychologists Questionnaire to determine the characteristics of Florida school psychologists. Significant differences were found between the actual and preferred time (in hours) that Florida school psychologists engaged in job functions, which were identified as assessment, counseling, consultation, research, and "other services." Further analysis revealed no difference in time spent in the main roles either as a function of the age or income level of the school psychologist. However, females reportedly performed more assessments than did males. The degree level of the psychologist was positively associated with the amount of time in the counseling role. The psychologist-to-pupil ratio affected the amount of time spent in assessment and counseling. Qualitative analysis of focus group comments revealed that trends and movements within the profession have had little impact on daily service delivery. The most frequently reported areas of role discrepancy mentioned in the focus groups related to testing and assessment services, the inclusion movement, the reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Act in 1997, and Florida funding issues. Appendix A is a table of time spent in subdomain roles. Appendix B is the Focus Group Topology Flow Chart. (Contains 2 tables and 39 references.) (EMK)

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A Quantitative and Qualitative Study of Role Discrepancy Among Florida School Psychologists: A Survey of Actual\Preferred Roles and Functions

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Abstract

Two hundred and eleven practicing Florida school psychologists' data were derived from a modified version of National School Psychologists Questionnaire (NSPQ) with respect to the characteristics of Florida school psychologists. Significant differences were found between the actual and preferred time (in hours) that Florida school psychologists engaged in job functions (assessment, counseling, consultation, research, and "other services"). Further analyses revealed no difference in time spent in the main roles either as a function of the age or income level of the school psychologist. However, females reportedly performed more assessments than did males. The degree level of the psychologist was positively associated with the amount of time in the counseling role. The psychologist-to-pupil ratio affected the amount of time spent in assessment and counseling.

Qualitative analysis of focus group comments revealed that trends and movements within the profession have had little impact on daily service delivery. The most frequently reported area of role discrepancy mentioned in the focus groups related to testing and assessment services, the inclusion movement, the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997, and Florida funding issues.

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The Florida School Psychologists of 1998
A Quantitative and Qualitative Study

Introduction

The roles and functions of school psychologists, as well as the scope of their services, have been and continue to be topics of debate and criticism among the educational community (Cutts, 1955; Fagen & Wise, 1994; Hagemeir, 1998; Harstone & Johnson, 1985). School psychologists have also struggled to define their role in relation to both the special education movement and regular education (Cobb, 1990).

Various groups and organizations have different concepts of what school psychologists should be doing, as opposed to what is actually being done in the field, based on their training, job expertise, and best practice guidelines (Bardon, 1982; Fisher, Jenkins, & Crumbley, 1986; Hartstone & Johnson, 1985). Numerous national and state studies have reported significant differences between actual and preferred rates of service delivery of professional school psychologists' activities. Published reports indicate a long-term trend of over 50% actual assessment time, with the remainder of time devoted to counseling, consultation, and research related to professional role and job functions (Benson & Hughes, 1985; Cook & Patterson, 1977; Dansiger, 1969; Farling & Hoedt, 1971; Fisher et al. 1986; Huebner & Wise, 1991; Hughes, 1979; Meacham & Peckham, 1978; Ramage, 1979; Reschly, Genshaft, & Binder, 1987; Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Smith, 1984; Smith, Clifford, Hesley, & Leifgren, 1992). Critics argued that a majority of school psychology services have been directed toward a small percentage of the school-aged populations generally for the purpose of placement within exceptional student education programs (Will, 1988).

In the last decade, the professional literature has advocated for a more even distribution of school psychologist services encompassing counseling, consultation, and proactive behavioral interventions (Reschly, 1988; Reschly & Ysseldyke, 1995).

Method

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to: (a) report the current status of congruence between actual and preferred roles and job functions of practicing Florida school psychologists, (b) collect updated demographic data and work-related information about Florida school psychologists, (c) compare actual and preferred role time spent in job functions of Florida school psychologists with previous Florida, state, and national data, and (d) explore perceptions that Florida school psychologists have of movements and trends that affect role discrepancy.

Participants

The names and addresses of 476 Florida school psychologists were compiled from a cross-referencing of names from the agency of the Florida Department of Education (DOE) Florida Department of Education, (1997) and the (FASP) Membership Directory, (1996-97). The abstracting of the names and addresses of 476 Florida school psychologists, who were employed within the public schools of Florida and were members of FASP, were obtained. School psychologists selected from the population who indicated a primary role other than that of a practitioner employed within Florida schools were not included in this study. In order to maximize the number of returns for this study, support in the form of "encouragement" by the Florida Association of School Psychologists (FASP) was requested and obtained.

Participants for the three focus groups were selected from solicitations by lead psychologists and presidents of local professional school psychologists' organizations who attended the Florida (FASP) state school psychologists' conference in November of 1997. Sample participants were selected from two local school districts and one local professional school psychologist organization. Two of the focus groups took place at local school district's administrative offices and one focus group took place at a private residence.

Procedures

Demographic data and estimates of time spent in actual/preferred roles and functions of school psychologists in the state of Florida were obtained utilizing the mail survey method.

A three step procedure for distribution, data collection, and follow up mailings, as recommended by Creswell (1995), was utilized. Two weeks after the first mailing, a complete re-mailing of the entire survey packet to all non-respondent participants was initiated. A follow-up postcard reminder was mailed during the next two weeks to all further non-respondents encouraging them to respond. A number of cases (25) of the non-respondents were randomly surveyed in order to ascertain if their responses biased the results of the study (Borg & Gall, 1989). The sample of non-responding subjects answered the questions pertaining to actual/preferred service delivery on the FSPQ in about the same manner as the responding group. The administration and follow up process took six weeks to complete. After the surveys were complete, focus group interviews were implemented.

Instruments

The Florida School Psychology Questionnaire (FSPQ) was used to collect updated demographic information from Florida school psychologists. The FSPQ was also used to collect hours of time spent in actual/preferred roles and functions. The Florida School Psychology Questionnaire (FSPQ) used in this study is a modified version of the National School Psychology Questionnaire-II, developed by Douglas K. Smith at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls (Smith, et al. 1992). Permission was obtained from the author to reproduce and modify the NSPQ-II for this study (K. Smith, personal communication, December 18, 1996).

Respondents were requested to supply the following demographic and job role information: (a) current job title, (b) primary role designation, (c) experience as a practicing school psychologist, (d) current employment status, (e) months employed, (f) gender, (g) age, (h) location of employment, (i) highest educational degree completed, (j) approximate number of students serviced per year, (k) psychologist/student ratio, (l) approximate size of school population by district/county, (m) number of schools serviced, (n) number of other school psychologists employed in district or county, (o) total time spent serving students by grade levels, (p) professional affiliations, (q) national certification status, (r) license status for practice of school psychology in Florida, (s) race, and (t) salary range.

A pilot testing of the focus group question interview guide was completed from a random sample of school psychologists in attendance at a local state Florida School Psychologist (FASP) state conference in November of 1997. The interview guide used in this study was presented to school psychologists with knowledge about the proposed topic (s). Questions were reviewed in order to arrive at the "grand tour questions" which were geared to elicit responses relevant to the study (Krueger, 1998). Implementation of the focus group centered around: (a) an introduction, (b) a general discussion of questions, (c) eliciting different points of view, and (d) responding to participants' comments (Krueger, 1994). Once focus groups began, issues of confidentiality were explained and consent was obtained. Consent was also obtained from all participants to audio tape the interviews.

Data Analysis

Five 2-tailed t-tests for dependent groups were used to analyze estimated hours of actual/preferred service delivery, treated as interval data, separately for each of the five domains (assessment, counseling, consultation, research and other services). The means and standard deviations of actual/preferred time spent performing each specific job function under each of the more general role domains were computed and reported for descriptive purpose only.

The influence of five categorical demographic variables (age, gender, income, degree level, and school psychologist-to-pupil ratio) on time spent in actual services was explored using one-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA). When a significant F-ratio was found, a post hoc test was then used to determine which of the levels of each factor underlie the statistically significant effects (Kirk, 1982).

Analysis of qualitative data followed a model of data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Morgan, 1998). Focus group participants' edited quotes were reported to highlight and emphasize points of view and summaries. Conclusions were drawn by comparing and contrasting themes, concepts, and ideas obtained from the typed transcript.

Results and Discussion

The response rate for the initial mailing was 26.60% (n=127), the response rate for the

second follow-up mailing was 16.09% (n=80) and the response rate for the post card reminder was 6.10% (n=29). The final response rate for all three mailings was 49.60% (n=236). Two hundred and eleven respondents, who identified themselves as full time school psychologists employed within Florida public schools, were included in the data analysis.

Characteristics of participants

The mean age of respondents was 45.35 with a standard deviation of 8.97 (mean=45.35, S.D.=8.97). The largest percentage of respondents (48.2%) was in the 45-57 year range. Females totaled 71.63% of the survey sample (n=149). Males comprised 28.36% of the sample (n=59). Fifty percent of respondents (n=104) listed the Specialist Degree as the highest degree attained, while 24.9% listed the Master's plus 45 (n=51) as the highest degree attained. The Doctorate degree was listed by 15.1% (n=31) of the respondents. Only 9.3% listed the Master's degree (n=19) as the highest degree obtained. The largest number of respondents, 26.8%, listed their income in the $40,000-$44,999 level (n=56). Only 3.3% listed their income as above $65,000 (n=7) while 1% reported their income in the $25,000-$29,999 range (n=2).

The mean psychologist-to-pupil ratio was 1:2,634 with a standard deviation of 1:1,128 (mean=2,634, S.D.=1,128). The most frequent school psychologist-to-pupil ratio noted was in the 1:2,000-2,999 range (39%, n=69). These results along with other service delivery data from the FSPQ, are presented in more detail in Table 1.

<Table 1 here>

Actual\Preferred Time Spent in School Psychologists Roles

Florida school psychologists reportedly spent the most *actual* time in assessment (mean = 21.31 hours), followed by consultation (9.28 hours), "other services" (mean = 5.48 hrs), counseling (mean = 3.39 hours), and research (.37 hours). Assessment activities consumed a total of 21.31 hours or (53.3%) of respondents' time.

The mean *preferred* time in these roles indicated that school psychologists desired to spend more time in counseling. However, school psychologists preferred to spend less time in assessment and "other services". Based on t-tests' results the amount of time spent in each role

differed significantly from the amount of time preferred in each role, ($p < .01$). Also, the direction of the difference varied across roles. Actual\Preferred Time Spent in School Psychologists Roles are presented in Table 2.

<Table 2 here>

Estimates of actual and preferred time spent in the subdomains that comprise each of the five roles also were elicited from surveyed school psychologists. Means and standard deviations of actual time and preferred time in each subdomain were reported for descriptive purpose only (See Appendix A).

Actual Time Spent in Roles by Age Range

The mean and standard deviation of estimated hours spent in each role as a function of age range were computed. Five one-way Analyses of Variance were conducted to assess the difference in estimated time actually spent in the roles of assessment, counseling, consultation, research, and "other services", each as a function of the age range of the school psychologist. No significant difference was found in time spent in any of the five roles as a function of age range, $p > .05$.

Actual Time Spent in Roles by Gender

To determine the effect of gender on time spent in assessment, counseling, consultation, research, and "other services", five t-tests for independent groups and unequal n were performed, separately for each role. The independent t-test procedure is equivalent to the One-Way ANOVA procedure when only two levels of the independent variable (male and female) were being compared, consequently an independent t-test procedure was performed to determine the effect of gender on actual time spent in assessment, counseling, consultation, research, and "other services" (Norusis, 1996, p.294). Males and females did not differ significantly in the time they spent in counseling, consultation, research, or "other activities", $p > .05$. However, females reported spending significantly more time in assessment activities compared to the reports of males, $t(99.65) = -2.22$, $p > .05$.

Actual Time Spent in Roles by Income

Analyses of Variance outcome revealed no significant difference in time spent in any of the five roles of assessment, counseling, consultation, research, or "other services" as a function of the income of school psychologists, $p > .05$.

Actual Time Spent in Roles by Degree Level

The mean and standard deviation were computed for the estimates of hours that school psychologists actually spent in each of the five roles. Five one-way Analyses of Variance were conducted, each to assess differences in time spent in one of the roles as a function of the training level of the school psychologist. The levels of degree were master's level, master's-level-plus-45-hours, specialist level, and doctorate level. ANOVA revealed a significant difference in the time spent in counseling as a function of degree level, $F(3, 198 = 3.307)$, $p < .05$. Post-Hoc test revealed that doctorate level persons performed significantly more counseling than specialist level, master's level, or master's-level-plus-45 degree holders. There were no significance differences in mean counseling time among the latter three groups.

The ANOVAs revealed no significant difference in actual time spent in any of the four remaining roles of assessment, consultation, research, or "other services", $p > .05$.

Actual Time Spent in Roles by Psychologist: Pupil Ratio

Means and standard deviations of the estimates of time spent in assessment, counseling, consultation, research, and "other services" were computed. To determine whether the time spent in various roles is affected by the number of pupils within a school psychologists' responsibility, five one-way Analyses of Variance were performed. Each ANOVA was performed separately for the main roles of assessment, counseling, consultation, research, and "other services". Analysis of Variance revealed a significant difference in the number of hours reportedly spent in assessment duties as a function of psychologist-to-pupil ratio, $F(4, 170) = 4.13$, $p < .05$. Post Hoc test showed that school psychologists who worked with 1,499 or fewer pupils spent significantly less estimated time doing assessments than those who worked with 1,500 - 1,999 pupils, 2,000 - 2,999 pupils, 3,000 - 3,999 pupils, or 4,000 - 4,999 pupils. No other differences were significant.

Analysis of Variance also indicated a significant difference in the number of hours reportedly spent in the counseling role as a function of psychologist-to-pupil ratio, $F(4, 170) = 2.69$, $p < .05$. Post Hoc tests results showed that school psychologists who worked with 1,499 or fewer pupils did significantly more counseling than those who worked with either 2,000 - 2,999 pupils, 3,000 -3,999 pupils, or 4,000 - 4,999 pupils.

1991 and 1998 Florida Surveys

School psychologist characteristics and service delivery roles and functions derived from the FSPQ were compared with those results derived from the School Psychologists in Florida survey SPPIF (Kranzler, 1992) survey. Comparison data indicates that the population of school psychologists in Florida is aging, with more school psychologists entering the 45 to 62 age range. The field of school psychology in Florida is becoming an increasingly feminine profession (66.5% in 1991 compared to 71.9% in 1998). Also, a less than proportional ethnic representation has occurred with the number of African American school psychologists, in relation to the overall school population, representing less than one percent of school psychologists employed within the public schools in Florida. More school psychologists in 1998 reported psychologist-to-pupil ratios in the 1,500 to 3,000 ranges, and more combined (urban, suburban, and rural) work locations were reported in 1998 as compared to the 1991 study. The specialist level (51%) is the predominant degree held by Florida school psychologists in 1998. School psychologists in Florida in 1998 conducted more assessment related services, less counseling, more consultation and less "other" services than in 1991. Research continued to consume little (less than one percent) of school psychologists' time in 1991 and in 1998.

The FSPQ and State Surveys

A comparison of school psychologists' characteristics and service delivery of the FSPQ with other recent state surveys indicated that: (a) the population of school psychologists in Florida is older than the psychologists' age ranges reported in other recent state surveys; (b) the field of school psychology in Florida continues to be a predominantly female-oriented profession as it is in most other states; (c) the specialist level entry degree has slowly become the predominant level of

education for school psychologists in most states; (d) school psychologists in other states, as well as Florida, have maintained and increased their level of experience within the profession; (e) school psychologist-to-pupil ratios, after having leveled off in the early 1990s, appear to be increasing.

School psychologists in Florida in 1998 continued to perform more than 50% of their services within the assessment area, which is consistent with recent state surveys. School psychologists in Florida in 1998 performed less consultation, less research, and less "other" service delivery than their counterparts. Survey results, while inconsistently reported, nevertheless indicate that school psychologists spend very little time in research-related activities. Discrepancies between actual/preferred time spent in service delivery, in all areas has continued throughout most of the surveys listed.

FSPQ and National Surveys

A comparison of service delivery derived from the FSPQ with recent national surveys indicated that: (a) while variations in age ranges have been evidenced over the last two decades, both FSPQ and national school psychologists have generally reported a slowly changing, yet increasingly aging school psychologist work force; (b) over the last two decades, the profession has shifted from a predominantly male-oriented profession to a decidedly female-dominated work force; (c) the highest degree held by professional school psychologists has shifted from predominantly master level to the specialist level, with little change in the percentage of doctorate level practitioners within the profession; (d) psychologist-to-pupil ratios continue the trend evidenced since the early 1980s in slowly being reduced to less than 1 to 2,000 at the national levels, yet still well below the NASP recommended 1 to 1,000 level (NASP, 1995) at both the national and Florida levels. The school psychologist-to-pupil level in Florida indicates an increase in the psychologist-to-pupil ratio in relation to a recent national survey.

Qualitative Focus Group Data

Focus group participants indicated that, in general, the "Revolution in School Psychology" (Reschly, 1988) and "The Paradigm Shift" (Reschly, & Ysseldyke, 1995), along with other

proposals for alternative and expanded service delivery published in the professional literature in the last two decades, have had little direct impact on school psychologists' professional service delivery. Nonetheless, participants reported that there are other job functions they could perform to help students, but they are unable to bring about change in the service delivery at their schools.

More relevant themes and issues that have affected their role and job function as reported by focus group participants were related to the reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 1997), the inclusion movement, the REI (Will, 1988) and the Florida Matrices Funding program for ESE services. Typical comments by school psychologists included:

> *The paradigm shift has been minimal and revolution nothing but a skirmish (Leo, school psychologist FG II).*

> *I have been in the business 20 years and have seen changes and shifts; we are looking at 1988 and 1995. There have been some changes, but they have been very slow at best (Sam, school psychologist FGII).*

> *Inclusion movement, paradigm shift even though we know they are there in theory, does it actually happen? The perception is that you know what you should do but we don't really do it. (Nancy, school psychologist FGI).*

> *We go to work every day and feel like we are doing a great job, working hard doing what we were trained to do and yet the cognitive dissonance is that what people are saying, the professionals in the field, NASP for instance and people like Ysseldyke and Reschly who are doing research. What we are doing is not having the effect we would like to see (Carl, school psychologist* FGI").

Role discrepancy. Role discrepancy for school psychologists took the form of not being able to be in one school longer than just once a week, thus providing limited service delivery to a small population of pupils. "Frustration" was noted by stakeholders in relation to school psychologists' inability to follow up on evaluations with placement/curriculum recommendations. The theme of less comprehensive testing was noted in all three groups, and focus group participants reported that the quality of comprehensive evaluations has been diminished. Some participants noted that while their roles have expanded over the last 10-15 years (more inservices,

more workshops, more crisis interventions), their overall case load, in relation to psychologist-to-pupil ratios, has not been reduced. All three groups were unanimous in the opinion that the role of crisis intervention counseling has expanded tremendously, and most respondents related to crisis counseling as a positive intervention and role for school psychologists. Typical comments by school psychologists included:

> *I have seen the main role discrepancy, as has already been said, as the testing end and the inability to see students in other contexts outside of the assessment role for placement (Bob, school psychologist FGI).*
>
> *For me role discrepancy is at the school based level. I have three different schools and I feel that I have to function within what I perceive my job to be and what each of my different schools perceive my job to be. I believe that is where discrepancy exists primarily for me (Dot, school psychologist FGII).*
>
> *I guess it just comes down to the discrepancy between what I see myself doing and the services I can provide the schools and what the schools are asking of me (Pat, FGIII).*
>
> *I see school psychologists stepping into areas, or gaps that have developed out of needs. Crisis intervention being one area I could use as an example that 10 years ago was sort of ground-breaking for our group within this county. (Ralph, school psychologist FGII).*
>
> *I think that over the last few years with the role expansion, I feel that our jobs have become increasingly more frustrating because there are more things that we want to do and are asked to do and we cannot possibly do them all (Ray school psychologist FGI).*

Professional service activities. Focus group participants in all three sessions indicated that the professional service activities school psychologists actually engage in on a day-to-day basis are largely influenced by the school system requirements. Focus group stakeholders reported that the public (e.g., parents, mental health organizations, and medical doctors) perceived school psychologists as providing more individual counseling, group counseling, and behavioral intervention services to a wider range of the school population. Stakeholders reported that even within the profession of psychology, there are professionals who believe that school psychologists

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provide group counseling, crisis counseling, and curriculum counseling on a routine basis to the general school population.

Psychologists reported that the use of skills other than those directly related to testing and assessment were utilized upon (e.g., counseling, consultation and crisis intervention) only when supported by supervisory staff. Typical comments by school psychologists related to these topics included:

> *I think perhaps the general public and a lot of parents who haven't previously been involved in ESE tend to think that we are the counselors that do counseling and parents are always very surprised to hear that perhaps all of us cannot schedule peer counseling on a regular basis (Bob, school psychologist FGI).*
>
> *I think the general public perception of how much direct student contact we have is much greater than it is in actuality and probably more in line with the student contact hours we would like to have. Certainly that perception is out there (Sam, school psychologist FGIII).*
>
> *I think that the general public, when they hear just the word "psychologist" think of a certain level of therapeutic training, a certain level of emphasis on counseling. If you polled a thousand people and asked them "What does a psychologist of any kind do?" Their first response would not be related to testing. They think of mental health issues like counseling or whatever (Carl, school psychologist FGII).*
>
> *I think that parents rely on stereotypical kinds of views of the professional - certainly. I think that the term (school psychologist) conjures up ongoing long-term opportunities for counseling with their children. Where our speciality, perhaps by necessity, is short-term solution of oriented kinds of counseling interventions which may be pretty foreign to them (Joe, school psychologist FGII).*

Role diversification. School psychologists who moved out of the traditional itinerant role of "school psychologist" did report that the broad- based training they received aided them in making the transition to more diversified roles. Participants in this study reported that the training school psychologists received in crisis intervention, functional assessment, Curriculum Based Assessment, and individual and group counseling, along with research and program evaluation skills, helped the school psychologist deliver a wide range of psychological services to students, administrators, and parents. Stakeholders also reported that role discrepancy issues related to

expanded service delivery may produce a need for more outcome-based research. Typical comments by school psychologists related to these topics included:

> *I have been asked to do a lot of work with program development and personnel development and overviewing of 28 sites for alternative education. Testing and evaluation is not at all, any more, a part of my function. It has been a real shift, so in that aspect I have moved on to a more challenging and diversified role, so, to answer the question succinctly, the training has been a very good foundation (Pat, school psychologist FGII).*
>
> *I think for me it is less a matter of a discrepancy between what I am trained to do and what I actually do and more percentage of emphasis on doing based on where I am at (Sam, school psychologist FGII).*
>
> *We are trained in testing, counseling, crisis intervention, all kinds of things, but depending upon where we find ourselves be it district, school, etc., we bring up that part of our training and emphasize it. Kind of like being a mechanic that is trained to fix the whole car but maybe you go to work for a shop that wants you to just work on carburetors, so that is all you do - but you know how to fix the whole car (Gene, school psychologist FGII).*
>
> *I think that there could be some positive things that go on. I am a proponent of looking at more outcome based kinds of things. So maybe what will happen as a result of some of these influences actually establishing a research base of effective practices for special education populations- to show what really has to happen, if anything can happen to positively impact the academic growth of kids, if so what are they, in what conditions are they functional (George, school psychologist FGI).*

Role perspectives. Focus group participants perceived that proposed changes toward providing more extensive service delivery without alternative funding options, outside of the current "refer and test" funding model, would only perpetuate the discrepancy relating to role discrepancy and alternative service delivery in Florida schools without providing realistic solutions. Typical comments by school psychologists related to these and other topics included:

I think that it is the age old problem in education of not enough funding. If we were really going to do the job that we could do to be truly effective, there would have to be more of us. Probably one per school, certainly at the elementary level, and maybe somebody to work with us, like an interventionist kind of a person, so if for interest if we did a CBA and somebody needed to carry out that intervention, that person could specialize in doing that perhaps.

Within our own profession there are people who believe that we should be more lecturers or classroom interventionists, or more research oriented. Even some wish we could do curriculum based management. There is a heterogeneous perspective of what we are and what we do. I think that enriches us in a lot of ways because it doesn't have to be one specific thing. We could do a lot of different things. (George, school psychologist FGI)

I think it is like what we have talked about. What we can provide is different from what we are doing. When we look at it from other perspectives, I think the parents - the people who have to deal with the kids that we see - would really like to see us be able to perform all of those components (counseling and consultation). They would like for us to be able to sit down with their child and talk things out and give them ideas of what on how to make a situation better. (Pat, school psychologist FGIII)

We have heard for many years - particularly when I was working with presenters for workshops who had a legal bent and they gave all these death and doom stories about what was going to happen with IDEA reauthorization in 1997 and if we thought that as school psychologists that our job security was going to undermined by that and that they were going to take away testing and that has not happened. If anything, we have more in the way of expectation in the line of testing. The tricky part now is how do you get the services out to kids that we as a profession feel that kids need, but also having to balance the testing again, even more responsibility to some degree. (Matthew, school psychologist FGIII)

Summary and Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that practicing Florida school psychologists' service delivery continues to be characterized by great diversity in roles and functions. Publications within the professional literature and Federal legislation have proposed and\or mandated changes in the delivery of services provided by school psychologists (Reschly, 1995; IDEA, 1997).

Role expansion. The practice of school psychology at both the state and national level has remained relatively static. Over the last two decades, the role of assessment and its related job

functions continue to be the service delivery that consumes the major portion of school psychologist practitioners' time. In contrast, consultation, "other services", counseling, and research follow, but added together consume less time than is denoted by assessment activities. Practitioners in Florida continue to indicate a preference for providing more time to counseling, consultation, and research and less time to assessment activities. Florida school psychologist practitioners indicate a desire to diversify their roles.

Actual/preferred service time in role discrepancy. The results of this study have revealed that there is a discrepancy between time spent in actual and preferred service delivery by school psychologist in Florida. This outcome may be due in part to the comprehensive course requirements in training programs that provide practicing school psychologists in Florida with diverse knowledge and skill levels. These diverse knowledge and training levels may be inconsistent with the limited daily job functions mandated by federal regulations and the reality of school systems' needs. Few school psychologists in Florida appear to find employment in settings which support all (or even most) of the roles and functions for which they are trained. Results of this study suggest that practicing school psychologists in Florida consider their skills under-utilized, as evidenced by increasing role discrepancy measured by this survey.

Reschly (1988) presented a comprehensive view of reform in school psychology that suggested using more broad-based assessments, interventions, consultation, and direct interventions for all at-risk students. However, the results of the current FSPQ study indicate that in spite of national movements, NASP training models, and related literature advocating expansion of roles, role diversification has yet to occur for school psychologists in Florida.

Guidabaldi (1981) has also suggested that school psychologists desire role diversity, but the present emphasis on psychoeducational assessment of handicapped students has essentially limited school psychologists roles. The results of the 1998 FSPQ study indicate that Florida continues the trend evidenced by previous state and national studies in relation to limited expansion of alternative service delivery for school psychologists. The "revolution" in school psychology centering on expansion of psychological services utilizing more counseling and

consultation models and direct interventions (Reschly, 1988; Roberts & Rust, 1994; Will, 1988) has yet to be evidenced in Florida.

Gender role discrepancy. Females reported spending significantly more time than males in assessment activities. The results of this study indicate that the majority of psychologists' service delivery time (67%) is spent providing assessment services to early childhood, pre-school, and elementary students, perhaps reflecting the fact that many female school psychologist prefer to serve these populations.

Doctoral level training. The doctoral level of training continues to be the one degree level that consistently indicates a significant difference in actual time spent in various roles as a function of the training level of school psychologists (Kranzler, 1992; Reschly, 1992). Post hoc results from this study indicate that doctorate level school psychologists in Florida performed significantly more counseling than specialist level, master level, or master level (+45) practitioners. However, at the national level, the doctoral level of training is associated with significant differences in all roles measured (Reschly and Wilson, 1997), reflecting diversified service delivery (more counseling, consultation, and research) at the doctorate level, and less assessment. The lack of consistently significant differences by level of training for assessment, consultation, research, and other services in Florida, as reported in this study, may be related to the doctorate level degree reflecting a higher level of competence needed in only one domain (counseling). Doctorate level expertise in research and other domains were not professional services that required more actual time by doctorate level Florida school psychologists in relation to Specialist Level, Master Level and Master Level+45 training in Florida.

Psychologist-to-pupil ratio. The results of the FSPQ revealed that the psychologist-to-pupil ratio has emerged as a variable that affects the number of hours spent in various roles by Florida school psychologists. Previous national and state studies (Reschly & Wilson, 1997; Roberts & Rust, 1994) have not shown the psychologist-to-pupil ratio as significantly impacting actual service delivery time.

Increases in psychologist-to-pupil ratios in Florida may be due to increases in the number of school age children in Florida in the last five years (approximately three percent per year) (Florida Membership 1996-97, 1998, p.4). This reported overall school population growth in Florida may necessitate an increased need for testing and other related psychological services provided by school psychologists.

Post-hoc results of the current study indicated that as psychologist-to-pupil ratios decreased, significantly less testing was completed. Significant increases were reported in counseling services where psychologist-to-pupil ratios were 1,499 or fewer. The national psychologist-to-pupil ratio reported in 1995 was 1 to 1,750. The psychologists-to-pupil ratio reported in this current Florida study was 1 to 2,634. Increases in psychologists-to-pupil ratios in Florida without increases in school psychologist personnel may limit the delivery of alternative services provided by school psychologists.

A review of the professional literature indicates that school psychologist-to-pupil ratios has shown large variations among states and regions and they appear to reflect historical patterns, per-pupil expenditures, and recession trends related to economic conditions (Lund, Reschly, & Martin, 1998). The increases in school psychologist-to-pupil ratios reported in this current Florida study, are higher than ratios reported in previous Florida, state, and national studies. Increases in the psychologist-to-pupil ratios in Florida may be the sign of a trend in Florida affecting the delivery of comprehensive psychological services to pupils in Florida.

In a study of job burnout among school psychologists, Mills and Huebner (1998), indicated that there was a moderate correlation between variables (such as job location, student caseload ratios, and number of colleagues) and levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (p. 113). Consequently, the impact of the increasing ratio of school psychologists-to-pupils reported in this study of Florida school psychologists may need to be further evaluated.

Qualitative Conclusions

Recent movements and trends within the field of school psychology have had very little impact on school psychologists' role expansion within the state of Florida, as evidenced by focus group responses in this study. This finding reflects the fact that the practice of school psychology in Florida, as in other states, has evolved to meet the needs of schools as they relate to the identification and classification of students for special education purposes. Consequently, the role of the school psychologist has continued to be rather narrow. Stakeholders in this study perceived that the profession of school psychology has had no clear mandate for role expansion in Florida.

If alternative service delivery in other domains is to occur, more staff will be needed within the school systems to expand psychological services in the schools. Perhaps funds for these services could be generated through state and local professional organizations working in unison with the Department of Education and federal agencies.

Perceptions of role discrepancy. Respondents' perceptions of role discrepancy indicated frustration related to limited role expansion, less time for comprehensive testing, and increased services demands (crisis interventions, behavioral assessments), without increases in staffing levels. Respondents reported that when role changes did occur, they were often the result of community pressures (suicides, falling grades, violence in the schools, etc.). School psychologists in Florida also reported that the discrepancies in special education program outcomes related to attendance, grades, etc., have not consistency shown the results that often justify costly special evaluation and placement recommendations.

In summary, the concept of role expansion can be best attained through school psychologists demonstrating to administrators and parents the scope of their expertise through inservices, increased teacher communication, and parental workshops where they can display their knowledge and willingness to work with all children on a wide range of mental health needs.

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Table 1

Characteristics of Sample

Variable	Number	Percentage	Mean	SD
Gender				
Female	149	71.63		
Male	59	28.36		
Age			45.35	8.97
<24	1	.5		
25-34	29	14.9		
35-44	46	23.6		
45-57	94	48.2		
58-62	25	12.8		
Experience as a School Psychologist	207		13.74	7.62
Teaching Experience	207		3.38	5.44
Contract Days	203		219	26.22
Location of Work				
Urban	57	27.5		
Rural	27	13.0		
Suburban	57	27.5		
> one location	66	31.9		
Highest Degree Completed				
Masters	19	9.3		
Master plus 45	51	24.9		
Specialist	104	50.7		
Doctorate	31	15.1		
Number of Evaluations Completed				
Initial Evaluation	198		78.48	46.20
Re-Evaluation	197		42.54	35.47
Other	197		7.41	18.05
Total	198		129.47	59.80
Psychologist-to-Pupil Ratio			2,634	1,128
1:<1,499	21	11.9		
1,500-1,999	18	10.2		
2,000-2,999	69	39.2		
3,000-3,999	48	27.3		
4,000-4,999	20	11.4		

Table 1. (continued)

Variable	Number	Percentage	Mean	SD
Number of School Sites Served			3.163	1.95
Percentage of Time Serving Pupils				
Early Childhood	211	.81		
Preschool (3-5)	211	10.27		
Elementary	211	56.27		
Middle School	211	18.16		
Senior High	210	13.20		
Professional Association				
FASP	199	94.3		
APA	19	9.0		
NASP	141	64.8		
Local Associations	58	27.48		
NCSP				
Yes	105	49.76		
No	104	49.28		
License for Private Practice				
Yes	94	44.54		
No	116	54.96		
Supervisor's Training				
School Psychology	118	56.5		
Special Education	52	24.9		
Clinical Psychology	3	1.4		
Regular Education	23	11.0		
Other	13	6.2		
Race/Ethnic Heritage				
Native American	1	.47		
Black/non-Hispanic	2	.95		
White/non-Hispanic	187	89.0		
Hispanic	15	7.14		
Haitian	1	.47		
Other	4	1.90		
Salary/Full Time				
25,000-29,999	2	1.0		
30,000-34,999	14	6.7		
35,000-39,999	20	9.6		
40,000-44,999	57	27.3		
45,000-49,999	40	19.1		
50,000-54,999	48	23.0		
55,000-59,999	7	3.3		
60,000-64,999	14	6.7		
65,000+	7	3.3		

Table 2

Descriptive Data for Actual and Preferred Time Spent in School Psychologists' Roles

		Actual Hours		Preferred Hours			
Roles	n	mean	SD	mean	SD	t	p
Assessment	207	21.31	8.76	15.24	6.76	13.41	.001*
Counseling	207	3.39	4.88	7.72	5.52	-14.94	.001*
Consultation	207	9.28	5.89	10.91	5.29	-5.53	.001*
Research	207	.37	1.62	1.77	3.18	-7.45	.001*
Other	207	5.48	6.16	4.70	4.91	2.80	.006*
TOTAL		39.83 Hours		40.34 Hours			

Note. Total hours do not equal 40 because respondents provided numbers less than or greater than the representative 40 hours for a work week when estimating time spent in actual and preferred roles.

*Using the Bonferroni correction for multiple t-tests, $p < .01$ (i.e., .05/5 comparisons) is required for an individual test to be declared significant at the .05 level.

APPENDICES

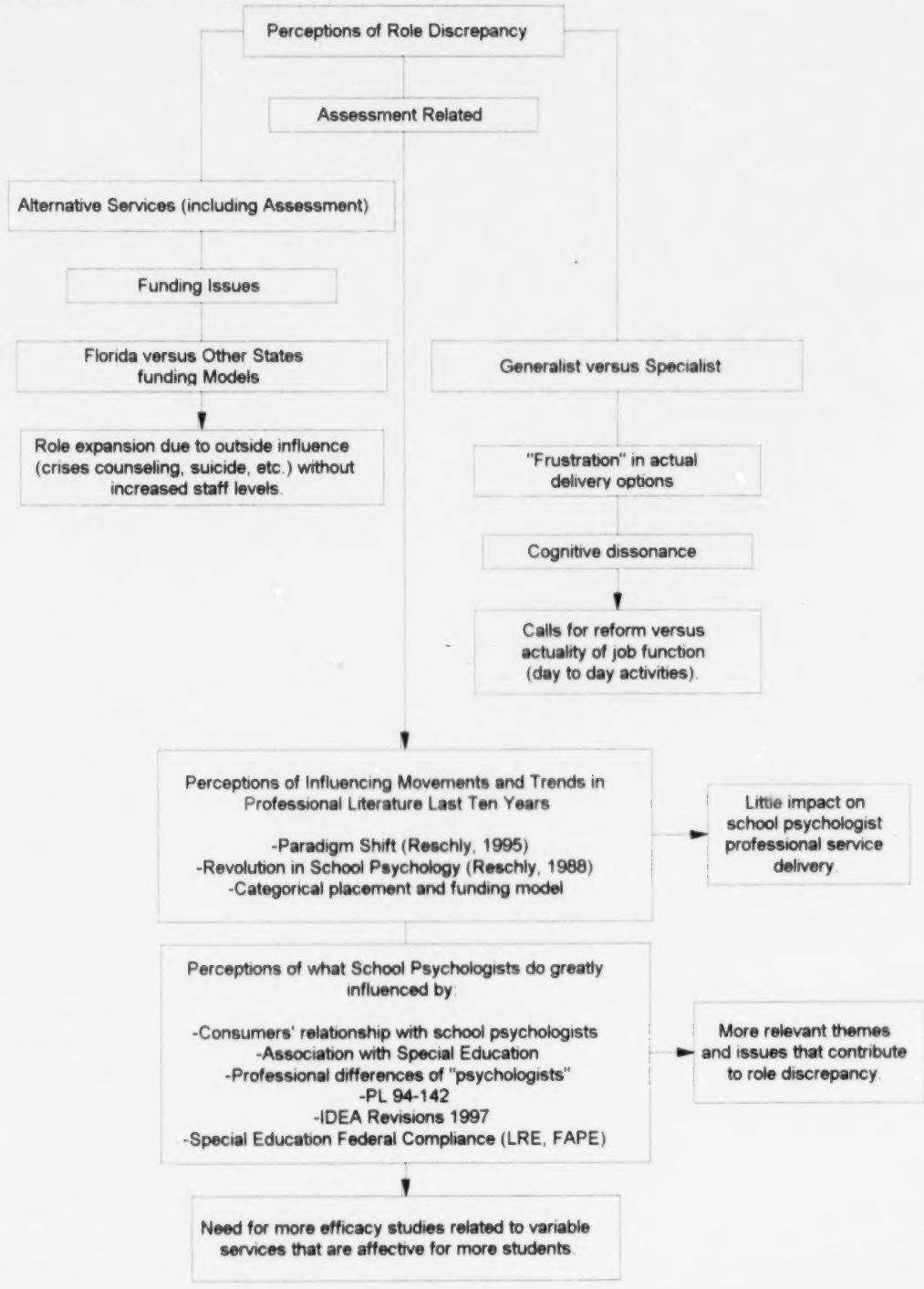
Appendix A

Actual and Preferred Time Spent in Subdomain Roles

	Actual Hours			Preferred Hours	
	n	mean	SD	mean	SD
Assessment	207	21.31	8.76	15.24	6.76
Curriculum Based/ Assessment	199	.56	2.14	1.77	2.70
Intellectual/ Achievement Tests	200	10.93	6.13	6.98	5.02
Personality/ Assessment	200	3.45	2.68	3.09	2.73
Student Observation	200	2.33	1.98	2.95	2.56
Report Writing	199	5.59	3.37	3.62	2.73
Counseling	207	3.39	4.48	7.72	5.52
Crisis Counseling	193	.73	1.41	1.11	1.84
Individual/ Counseling	197	2.04	3.65	3.80	3.64
Group Counseling	198	.70	1.94	2.28	2.81
Family Counseling	198	.56	1.81	1.89	3.38
Consultation	207	9.28	5.89	10.91	5.29
With Teachers	194	5.29	4.82	6.20	4.33
With Parents	193	2.96	2.46	4.07	2.73
With Administration	193	2.14	2.66	2.04	2.08
Research	207	.37	1.62	1.77	3.18
Developing Research	193	.14	1.13	.62	1.97
Conducting Research	193	.18	.79	.83	1.86
Program Evaluation	193	.21	1.09	.71	1.76
Research Writing	193	.06	.73	.43	1.47
Other Services	207	5.48	6.16	4.70	4.91
In Service	190	1.28	2.40	1.85	2.94
Suspension Hearings	191	.81	2.10	.56	1.54
504 Meetings	191	1.01	1.97	.87	1.62
Miscellaneous	70	6.79	5.60	4.79	4.79

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Topology Flow Chart


Perceptions of Role Discrepancy
Assessment Related
Alternative Services (including Assessment)
Funding Issues
Florida versus Other States funding Models
Role expansion due to outside influence (crises counseling, suicide, etc.) without increased staff levels.
Generalist versus Specialist
"Frustration" in actual delivery options
Cognitive dissonance
Calls for reform versus actuality of job function (day to day activities).
Perceptions of Influencing Movements and Trends in Professional Literature Last Ten Years
-Paradigm Shift (Reschly, 1995)
-Revolution in School Psychology (Reschly, 1988)
-Categorical placement and funding model
Little impact on school psychologist professional service delivery.
Perceptions of what School Psychologists do greatly influenced by:
-Consumers' relationship with school psychologists
-Association with Special Education
-Professional differences of "psychologists"
-PL 94-142
-IDEA Revisions 1997
-Special Education Federal Compliance (LRE, FAPE)
More relevant themes and issues that contribute to role discrepancy.
Need for more efficacy studies related to variable services that are affective for more students.

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